

**Harvard Allston Task Force**  
Meeting Minutes  
Monday, September 11, 2006  
Honan-Allston Library  
6:30 p.m.

**I. Attendance:**

**Harvard Allston Task Force**

Paul Berkeley  
John Bruno  
John Cusack  
Mike Hanlon  
Millie Hollum McLaughlin  
Bruce Houghton  
Harry Mattison  
Ray Mellone

**Harvard University**

John Audi  
Aileen Connolly  
Will Donham  
Chris Gordon  
Kevin McCluskey  
Dave Moffat  
Alison Reinhardt  
Kathy Spiegelman  
Maile Takahashi

**Behnisch Architects**

Stefan Behnisch  
Martin Werminghausen

**Cooper Robertson and Partners**

David McGregor

**City of Boston**

Gerald Autler, Boston Redevelopment Authority  
Linda Kowalcky, Boston Redevelopment Authority  
Adam Schulman, Boston Transportation Department  
Aldo Ghirin, Boston Parks and Recreation Department

**City of Cambridge**

Michael Bloom, Office of State Senator Jarrett Barrios

The meeting began at 6:35 p.m.

Gerald introduced the Task Force open space sub-committee which includes, John Cusack (TF Member), Harry Mattison (TF Member), Pallavi Mande (Charles River Watershed Association), Tom Lally (community member), and Heather Knopsnyder (Allston Brighton CDC). He also introduced Aldo Ghirin from the Boston Parks and Recreation Department. The work of the subcommittee is a continuation of the

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work done in the North Allston Neighborhood Strategic Plan (NANSP). Harry Mattison made a presentation on open space in North Allston. Key points from the presentation include:

### Goals:

- Provide sufficient open space for people who live and work in North Allston today and in the future
- Increase open space for people of all ages, people with physical disabilities, and for people with a range of interests
- Improve both the access to and condition of existing open spaces to make them more user friendly and ecologically functional
- Create links between open spaces and between the neighborhood and the Charles River
- Create new open space by “greening” paved lots and underutilized parcels

### Open Space needs:

- Facilities for active recreation other than baseball and softball
- “Urban wild” and passive recreation spaces where nature can be appreciated or used for public education
- Community-based open space designed to bring together residents for local events (neighborhood picnics, etc.)
- Community gardens
- Pocket parks throughout the neighborhood
- Public art installations
- Bike and pedestrian paths and green corridors from the neighborhood to the Charles River
- Signage marking public green spaces
- Increased greening of neighborhood streets by planting street trees, converting existing paved front yards to green space, and preventing future front yard paving

### Greening Opportunities for Major Roadways include:

- Western Ave., North Harvard St., Everett St., land on the south side of the street between Lincoln St. and the Mass Pike onramp (Harvard-owned), and Lincoln St. to the Mass Pike. Streets can be retrofitted with water-friendly landscapes to reduce storm water runoff. Trees can be planted on barren streets and vegetation can be added to medians and small parcels of land.

### Opportunities for New Open Space:

- Holton Street Corridor
- Honan Library Open Space
- Allston Creek Corridor
- 250 Everett Street
- NSTAR Property (corner of Mansfield-Lincoln Streets)
- Construction Lot on Adamson Street
- 90 Litchfield Street
- AD Handy Company lot on Aldie Street
- 54 Mansfield Street
- Franklin Street frontage of Western Ave.(Harvard-owned)

Harry asked Task Force members and audience members to think about how much open space is too much. The presentation will be posted on the BRA’s website.

David McGregor, of Cooper Robertson and Partners, presented updated information on the open space components for Harvard’s Master Plan. In alignment with the proposals in the NANSP, Harvard is planning to make the open space on the Allston campus more open and accessible than the open space on the Cambridge Campus. Harvard’s Master Plan looks at several open space opportunities on Harvard’s land:

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- **Library Park** (located behind the Honan Allston Library- formerly the MacNamara property)- The planning team incorporated ideas from the March 4, 2006 public workshop and is proposing the open space behind the library be used as a “big back yard”. The space would be conducive to mixed uses and would tie into some of the uses at the library. The plan proposes a “day light stream” that would start at the park and continue through Harvard’s property to the river. This idea corresponds with similar ideas that the Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA) has been advocating.
- **Rena Park**- Primary users could be families with young children. The park would have mixed uses for Harvard’s graduate students and community members.
- **First science complex**- There will be a yard between the four buildings and it will have interconnected pathways. Pedestrian pathways could be extended north through to the complex from Seattle, Bertram Street, and Hopedale Street.
- **Stadium Way** (east of the first science complex) - There is an opportunity to create a “green street” with trees planted and other streets/pathways extending to Stadium Way.
- **South Yard**- This will be a major open space feature larger than Harvard Yard. A public botanical/winter garden enclosed in a glass atrium is being proposed and will be a great visual and functional feature.
- **Barry’s Corner**- An all weathered covered area between the arts and cultural facilities (current Charlesview site) is proposed. On the north side of North Harvard Street, major athletics facilities will come together and provide a number of different uses. There will be a water feature the size of a hockey rink that will be a fountain in the summer and a skating in the winter.
- **Academic Way**- Major green pathway leading into the Business School.

Harvard intends to identify certain open spaces in its Master Plan as essential to the plan. In addition, there will be other open spaces that are created as a result of individual building designs, all of which will tie into an overall system. Other proposals in the Master Plan include: covering over Soldier’s Field Road at two locations to provide direct access to the river; renovating the Weeks Bridge or constructing a new bridge. Cooper, Robertson and Partner’s jurisdiction did not include land west of Barry’s Corner. Harvard’s planning team continues to plan for the land beyond the land Cooper, Robertson was charged with studying.

Questions/Comments:

Ray: Can you explain some of the facilities being proposed in Harvard’s athletics complex?

David McGregor: On North Harvard Street, west of the Stadium, there will be 2 athletic practice fields, one field will be turf and the other field will be grass. The planning team studied the alignment of the athletic fields. Certain moves of the buildings and fields are required to utilize all the space in the “thumb” because the current Ohiri fields will be used for professional schools.

Audience Member: Western Avenue is going to be inundated with traffic.

David McGregor: Right now Western Avenue is 46 feet from curb to curb, which includes 2 parking lanes, 2 moving lanes and an additional 6 feet. Our traffic consultants are considering the option of creating smaller moving lanes to slow down the traffic and possibly eliminate parking on the street. This will allow for bike paths in both directions. There will also probably be a traffic light at the edge of the science parcel on Western Ave. and additional crosswalks will need to be created.

Harry Mattison: The plan presented appears to be over a long period of time and includes the CSX land. What will the plan look like if the CSX land is not accessible?

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David McGregor: The open space would still include Library park, Rena St. Park, the first science parcel, Stadium Way, some of the proposed South Yard and all of the spaces north of Western Avenue if the Charlesview negotiations go through.

Harry Mattison: It would be a better idea to move athletic facilities that support more seasonal sporting events and draw smaller numbers of people to Barry's corner rather than winter sports like hockey and swimming.

Audience members and Task Force members expressed concern about the traffic and parking demands that would result from moving Harvard athletics facilities closer to Barry's corner.

Harry Mattison: The pathways from the community into Harvard's campus should be of equal size and equal stature going from east to west as they are from North to South or Harvard land to Harvard land.

Mike Hanlon: Where is the parking lot in front of the Spangler Center?

David McGregor: The goal is to have all of Harvard's parking in underground facilities. This will free up land for the Business school's development.

Mike Hanlon: The issue of parking should be addressed now, not just what will be done in the future.

Harry Mattison: Can you clarify the size of the library park?

David McGregor: I don't have the exact number but the size is close to the size that you suggested in your presentation.

Stefan Behnisch presented the conceptual designs for the first science building. At the conceptual design phase, the design for the building is only about 10% complete and defines the programming for the building more so than the design. Summary points from Stefan's presentation include:

- Rather than one large 500,000 square foot building, Stefan is proposing 4 individual buildings that will amount to approximately 500,000 square feet. The buildings will be connected both below and above ground. The buildings should be perceived as individual buildings within a family.
- At the street level, the buildings will have functions that animate the public realm such as an auditorium, retail, restaurant, café, exhibition space, bike storage, a fitness facility, benches, waiting areas, etc.
- There will be an atrium in the main building that will function as a large common space and will be visible from the street.
- Parking and delivery trucks will be below ground. No delivery will be done at grade because the goal is to get trucks off the street as fast as possible.
- There will be a prominent east to west connection through the complex.
- A large number of bike stalls will be available.
- The goal is to create a sustainable building including: rain water treatment on site; green roofs on top of the buildings; natural ventilation systems; and daylight enhancement systems.
- The buildings will likely be a natural stone façade.
- There will be winter gardens throughout the buildings that can be seen from the outside and will serve as common space within the buildings.
- There will be bridge/tunnel connections between the buildings.

Questions/Comments:

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Ray Mellone: Will security in the buildings be a high priority?

Stefan Behnisch: The perimeters of the buildings will be secure however; we are trying to avoid as many security check points as possible. The main building will have a secured entry to the areas that are not public.

Kathy Spiegelman: Harvard is hiring a security consultant to oversee the operational issues with securing the buildings. This will be handled program wide rather than just by each building. In the next phase of the design we will have a better sense of the security check points within the building.

Audience member: How high will the tallest building be and does it conform to the current zoning regulations?

Stefan Behnisch: The tallest building will be approximately 80 feet high.

Kathy Spiegelman: The current zoning regulation is 50 feet. However, as part of the Institutional Master Plan (IMP) approval process, if the city approves Harvard's plan then the area would be rezoned.

Audience Member: Why is Western Avenue considered not functional for truck delivery? Instead you are proposing bring trucks into our neighborhood.

David McGregor: Western Avenue is a high flow street so putting truck delivery stops on Western Ave. would slow down the flow of traffic. Additionally, there shouldn't be curb cuts on major streets, which is something the Boston Transportation Department (BTD) agrees with as well.

Harry Mattison: Why not have truck delivery on Rena Street or Stadium Way?

David McGregor: That is still a possibility that we are looking into.

Gerald Autler: It is important to remember that the other side of Rena Street is also Harvard owned property so the truck delivery would be in the middle of Harvard's campus, not the neighborhood.

John Cusack: Will a shadow be cast on Western Avenue because of the height of the main building?

Stefan Behnisch: Yes, in the fall/winter there will be a shadow. We can't rely on the winter garden to filter a lot of light on to the street.

Millie Hollum McLaughlin: At what level will the bridges be between the buildings?

Stefan Behnisch: We are proposing a total of 6 bridges but all of them will be at various levels.

Harry Mattison: Are the winter gardens in the buildings public spaces? Is there an opportunity to have public access to these spaces?

Stefan Behnisch: You are correct; they are communicative spaces within the buildings, not "public spaces". It is up to the client to determine the access to the winter gardens. The yard within the complex will be a very nice public space though.

Chris Gordon: A winter garden is also being proposed for the South Yard and that will be public.

Gerald asked Task Force members and audience member to provide feedback on the open space plans.

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Paul Berkeley: It is important to not turn every green space in Allston into a field. Instead it should be designed for all kinds of different uses.

John Cusack: I agree. There should be mixed use parks. Don't dedicate a whole area to one use.

Mike Hanlon: I would like to see a report on who the parks are permitted to.

Ray Mellone: Library park is situated in a residential area so the park should be designed to serve the residents. It should be preserved as a special residential place for the people who come to the library. I am concerned about a conflict of use between the residents and graduate students.

David McGregor: We were thinking about library park in the spirit of bring the community and Harvard together.

Audience Member: In a Boston Globe article on July 30, 2006 Heather Knopsnyder of the Allston Brighton CDC is quoted as saying Allston has 40% less green space as other areas in Boston. Allston should create additional green space.

Millie Hollum McLaughlin: We can never have enough green space. A lot of work has already been done to come up with ideas for green space. Could we have a recap of the ideas discussed at the March 4<sup>th</sup> public workshop that focused on public realm uses around Barry's corner? For example, at the library park space we discussed putting in a Gazebo and a café.

Gerald said the ideas for open space plans are still evolving especially on the non-Harvard owned property. Since Harvard will become a larger constituent group in the Allston neighborhood we should continue the conversation to develop an integrated system of open space in the neighborhood even though some spaces will be planned and implemented by Harvard and some will be implemented by the neighborhood in conjunction with the city. Millie suggested taking time to digest all of the information and discuss the topic at another meeting.

Audience Member: What are the strategies and guidelines that Olin Partners (landscape architect on Harvard's Master Planning team) are using for the public realm and open space?

David McGregor: Olin is working on design guidelines. For example, using different paving materials for surfaces with different uses or designing bike routes so they don't run into pedestrian pathways. We are also proposing street designs and sections for every street. This will have to be reviewed by the BTB.

Gerald addressed administrative items for the Task Force. At the 9/27 meeting Harvard will provide an update on its interim-land use plan. He said that Task Force members had requested time to discuss specific transportation issues and he turned the discussion over to Ray Mellone.

Ray discussed the Task Force's desire to take action regarding parking issues on North Harvard Street. He suggested that parking during peak traffic hours on North Harvard Street should be restricted. The Task Force would like to formally request a business plan from the BTB to alleviate the traffic issues on North Harvard Street by posting signs, restricting the time in which people can park, and towing and ticketing vehicles that violate the rules. Mike Hanlon made a motion to approve the request, John Cusack seconded the motion and the Task Force made a formal request to the BTB to present a business plan at the next Task Force meeting.

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Adam Schulman from the BTM assured Task Force members that BTM has been working on this issue and once the plan is approved it shouldn't take too long to implement. Ray stressed that the Task Force would like a firm commitment from the City.

Gerald suggested that the agenda items for the next meeting could include: Harvard's interim use plan, the BTM plan, and a discussion to narrow down the transportation priorities to discuss at the 10/11 meeting, including the transportation impacts that will result from the proposals in Harvard's Institutional Master Plan amendment.

Harry Mattison: The river crossings also concern to me. We should set priorities for what should be addressed in the short term versus the long term.

Audience Member: Even if the traffic problems at Barry's corner, Western Avenue and North Harvard Street are addressed, the traffic in Cambridge also needs to be addressed. We need to work with Cambridge and Cambridge needs to do its part. Cambridge City Council has appointed a committee to monitor the Harvard Allston Task Force and Harvard's planning in Allston.

Ray Mellone: We should prioritize the three implementation concepts that are in the NANSF.

John Bruno: Has the MBTA been actively involved in the conversations? Can we discuss changing the locations of bus stops on Western Avenue? There are far too many bus stops on Western Ave. than needed. The MBTA, BTM and Harvard need to discuss the transportation issues together and come up with a business plan that can be presented to the community.

Adam Schulman: The BTM works closely with the MBTA. We can discuss the possibility of consolidating 1-2 bus stops on Western Avenue.

Mike Hanlon: Locating Harvard's athletic fields and creating museums and arts facilities at Barry's corner will likely create more traffic congestion problems. In this case, the traffic won't just be during peak hours but could also be at night and on the weekends. A plan needs to be in place for how emergency traffic will get through.

Paul Berkeley: At Harvard athletic events, traffic enters and exits through one gate. The priority is always given to the cars leaving the athletic event. There needs to be more exit alternatives.

Kathy Spiegelman: Harvard's presentation on traffic will coincide with a presentation on parking.

Gerald asked Task Force members and audience members to send him additional feedback on the open space plans.

John Bruno made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the August 14<sup>th</sup> meeting. John Cusack second the motion and the meeting minutes were approved.

The meeting concluded at 8:45 p.m.